

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2003

The Honorable Dennis J. Hastert
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bill Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Thomas A. Daschle
Minority Leader
United States Senate
The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Hastert, Senator Frist, Leader Pelosi, and Senator Daschle:

As the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2004 goes to conference, we urge you to ensure that the conference agreement retains the Function 400 funding levels, the highway and transit investment levels and the budgetary firewall mechanism included in the Senate-passed resolution. We also urge that the conference agreement retains the "Contingency Procedure for Surface Transportation" language included in the House-passed resolution updated for the investment levels discussed above. Including these provisions represents a bicameral, bipartisan position on how the differences between the House and Senate resolutions should be resolved with regard to highway and transit programs.

There is widespread agreement that investment in our nation's highways, bridges, and transit systems must be increased significantly. Improving the nation's transportation infrastructure will reduce fatalities with safer highways, transit systems, and bridges, create hundreds of thousands of good jobs (for every \$1 billion of federal funds invested, and matched by the state, in transportation infrastructure we create 47,500 jobs), and save billions of dollars lost through congestion and delays.

Transportation is the fundamental building block of the U.S. economy. Investments in transportation infrastructure directly aid the productivity of our economy and will help us meet the economic challenges that we are facing now, and will face in the months and years to come.

As you know, the Bond/Reid amendment to the Senate resolution passed overwhelmingly, by a vote of 79-21. This amendment increased budget authority for highway and transit programs to a total of \$311.5 billion over the six-year period from fiscal years 2004-2009, the presumed length of the reauthorization bill that our Committees will produce later this year. The amendment also provides for the increased outlays associated with the higher budget authority.

For investment levels in excess of the \$311.5 billion, we recommend adoption of the type of contingency procedure for surface transportation included in the House-passed Budget Resolution. This provision will provide for additional budget authority and outlays for highways and transit contingent upon increased receipts to the Highway Trust Fund.

Although there is widespread agreement that transportation investment must be increased, there is not yet widespread agreement on how this increased investment should be financed. Therefore, the conference agreement on the budget resolution must incorporate the highest possible funding levels for these programs, and the maximum possible flexibility in how to finance those levels.

Your consideration and support in these matters is appreciated.

Sincerely,

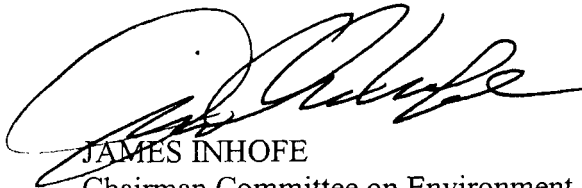


DON YOUNG
Chairman

Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure



JAMES OBERSTAR
Ranking Member

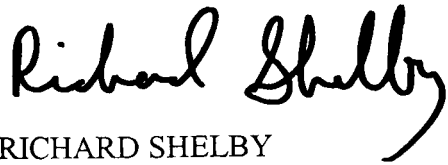


JAMES INHOFE

Chairman, Committee on Environment and
Public Works



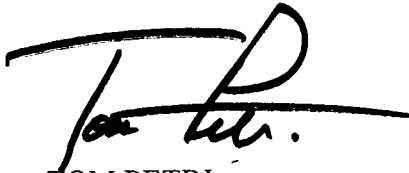
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Chairman
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Urban Affairs



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CHRISTOPHER "KIT" BOND
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Infrastructure
and Nuclear Safety



HARRY REID
Ranking Member

Cc:
Representative Jim Nussle
Representative John M. Spratt, Jr.
Senator Don Nickles
Senator Kent Conrad